

Georgia Institute of Technology

Ragauskas Named to Fulbright Chair

Atlanta (July 7, 2008) —In an effort to foster collaborative, international alternative energy research, the Fulbright Program named Professor Arthur J. Ragauskas the first recipient of the newly created Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Alternative Energy Technology. The position will be located at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden.

A professor of chemistry and biochemistry and a research faculty member of the Institute of Paper Science and Technology at Georgia Tech, Ragauskas has researched lignocellulosics since 1989 when his studies were primarily concerned with the conversion of woody material to pulp and paper. Events of recent years, however, have evolved the field to include alternative energy applications.

“Starting in 2003, when the IPST merged into Georgia Tech, we dramatically broadened our research to include the conversion of woody materials to biomaterials, bioenergy, biofuels and biochemicals,” Ragauskas said. Through partnerships with Oak Ridge National Laboratories, Imperial College London and other Scandinavian institutions, Ragauskas, his colleagues and students have made significant strides. (He served as a visiting professor at Chalmers in 2001, and from 1997 to 1998 he taught at the Royal Institute of Technology/STFi in Stockholm in 1998.)

The professor’s research efforts at Chalmers will center largely upon characterizing the changes in woody biomass structure during both the biological conversion of wood to ethanol and the gasification of wood and related materials to biofuels. The award provides a stipend of \$125,000, one of the largest in the international exchange program’s history. As Fulbright Chair, Ragauskas will address three key challenges:

- Development of new breakthroughs in green science and technologies, working to provide economically sustainable biofuels and bioenergy;
- Education of future leaders and society in general on the opportunities, challenges and benefits of sustainable biofuels and energy;
- Creating international partnerships that foster academic, economic and public policy development in the field of sustainable biofuels and energy development.

In addition to sharing his lignocellulosic biofuels and biorefinery expertise with faculty, students and researchers in Sweden, the chair will aid Ragauskas in developing a new partnership in communicating the need for an international push in developing sustainable cellulosic biofuels. Conventional tools, including classroom instruction and industry workshops, along with podcasts and other Web-based resources, will be used to further entrench this collaborative effort.

“The conversion of wood to biofuels is entering a very exciting phase,” he said, adding that several demonstration plants are currently under construction, and more efficient technologies are rapidly



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mitigating costs. “Our research team and others on the Tech campus are helping to bring about this ‘green industrial revolution.’”

Citing a kinship in how citizens of both the United States and Sweden relate to their natural forest resources, Ragauskas said positioning the Fulbright chair at Chalmers is a logical step, as it plays a significant role in the U.S. Embassy’s initiative to foster collaborative alternative energy research between the United States and Sweden. “Georgia has a large forest products industry, and so does Scandinavia,” he said. “Many countries around the globe have established sustainable forestry practices and there is every reason to believe these practices will apply to cellulosic ethanol from wood. The solutions to sustainable biofuels are international solutions.”

Beginning Aug. 1, Ragauskas will conduct his research from the Forest Products and Chemical Engineering department at Chalmers for a period of nine months over the next year. While at Chalmers he will continue to manage his group at Tech.

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- [Arthur J. Ragauskas](#)

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